



CHAPTER 2 — INTRODUCTION AND VISION

2010-2040 Long Range Transportation Plan

Introduction

To plan for the future of the SUATS MPO area, we must understand a series of fundamental relationships—how the past influences the present, how land use interacts with transportation, and how collective vision becomes a real, desirable future. This financially constrained transportation plan recognizes the need to embrace our history as we build for our future. The *2010-2040 SUATS Long Range Transportation Plan* is the result a multi-level partnership that brought local, state, and federal policy-makers to the table with local residents, business owners, and stakeholders.

What Is an LRTP and Why Update?

At its core, a long-range transportation plan (LRTP) identifies ways a region expects to invest resources to enhance its transportation system. The underlying principles and recommended actions of an LRTP reflect choices made by the public and private sectors regarding transportation investments, land use decisions, and infrastructure improvements. A typical LRTP consists of two parts—a description of the vision for the region and a detailed list of policies, operational strategies, and projects to achieve the vision. The LRTP must include a variety of actions that lead to “the development of an integrated intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods”.¹

These tasks are accomplished within the context of policy review and public involvement to produce an intermodal transportation system that respects an area’s history and heritage while providing true choice to all users. Federal regulations require the region’s LRTP be updated every 5 years to reflect changing needs and priorities. This plan updates the existing Sumter Area Transportation Study Metropolitan Planning Organization (SUATS MPO) LRTP last updated November 2007.

The federal government requires a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing process for initiatives to be eligible for federal transportation funding. To that end, several stakeholders had a hand in this updated plan, including:

- SUATS MPO
- City and County of Sumter
- Various local, regional, state, and federal agencies, including the Santee Wateree Regional Transit Authority, the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), the Federal Transit Authority (FTA), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Figure 2.1 illustrates the SUATS MPO area.

Growth and Changing Transportation Trends

The SUATS MPO area’s changing needs and priorities are the result of continued growth and changing transportation trends. The South Carolina Office of Research and Statistics, Health and Demographics Division estimates Sumter County will add approximately 2% of its 2010 population by 2030. The state population is expected to grow by approximately 18% within the same timeframe.

But the slower pace may not fully account for increased personnel transferring to Shaw Air Force Base following the 2005 round of military base closures and realignments. In its most recent recommendation, the Department of Defense made a commitment to the long-term future of Shaw AFB when it approved through the BRAC process the addition of more than 1,500 military and civilian employees. A potential of several thousand new residents is expected when including the employees’ families.

Additional growth provides residents with new cultural, recreational, and economic opportunities but creates renewed challenges for preserving the area’s high quality of life. These challenges include increased traffic congestion and pollution as well as loss of open space and evolving commuting patterns. Presently, a large percentage of Sumter County residents stay within the county for work. In fact, with 83% of its residents working in the county, Sumter ranks sixth in the state behind the larger Horry, Beaufort, Charleston, and Greenville Counties as shown in Table 2.1. Regional

growth has resulted in an expanded urbanized area and MPO boundary.

Table 2.1 - Percent of Work Trips Beginning and Ending in County

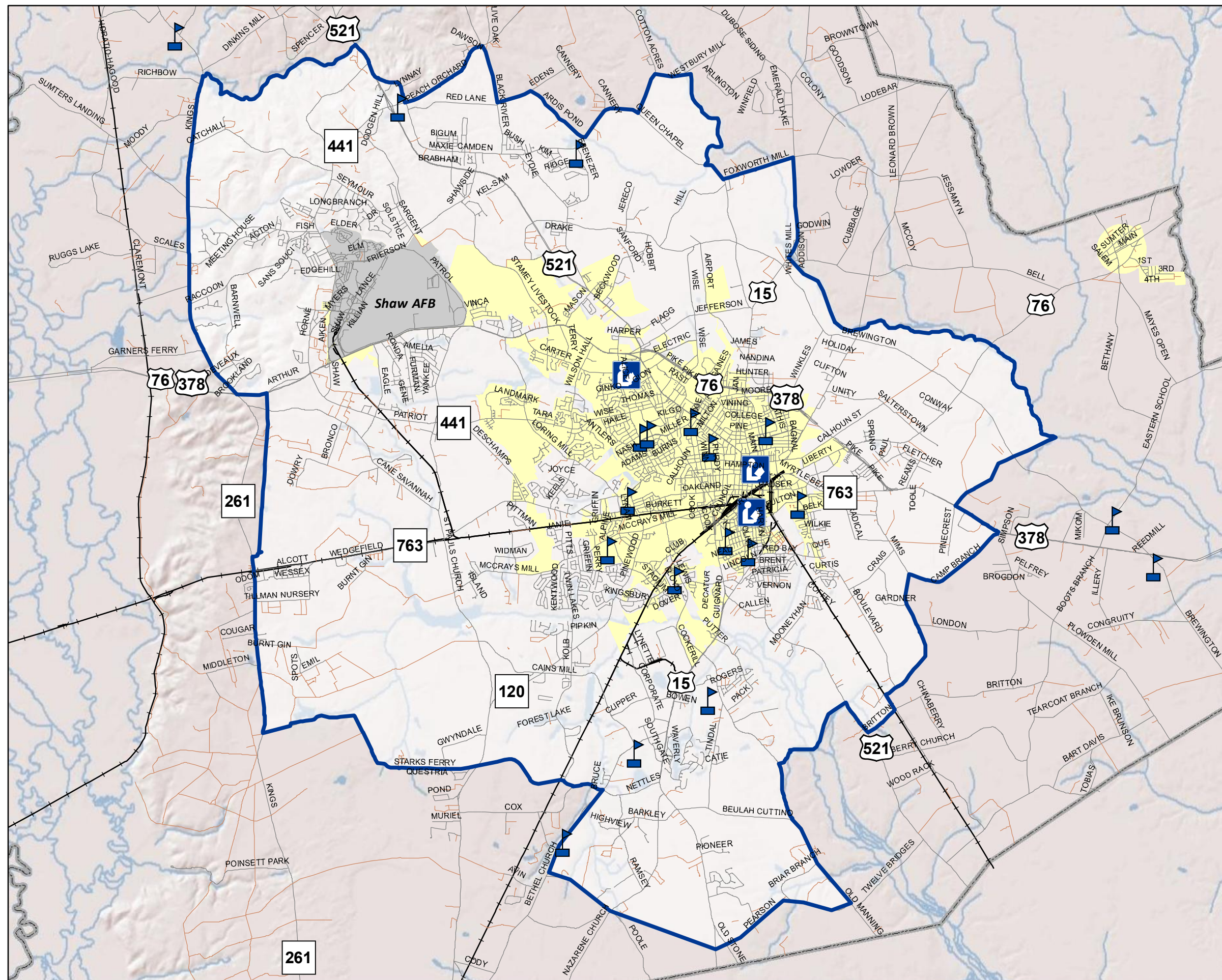
County	Total Work Trips From Residence County	Residence County Same As Work County	Percent
Horry	118,551	108,589	92%
Beaufort	70,344	64,343	91%
Charleston	166,693	146,452	88%
Greenville	201,260	171,274	85%
Florence	58,395	48,848	84%
Greenwood	28,988	24,174	83%
Sumter	42,962	35,681	83%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

A more centralized employment base places more pressure on local officials to establish a transportation system that balances the economic needs of the region. In Sumter County’s case, the central employment base does little to discourage local residents from using personal transportation to get to work. According to the 2000 Census and the 2010 American Community Survey, the share of commuters choosing to drive alone to work increased from 80.4% to 81.4% between 2000 and 2010. Public transportation users increased by only 0.1% and those biking or walking to work increased from 1.4% to 2.4%.

The increased reliance on driving alone to work burdens the transportation system. The average travel time to work for Sumter County workers remains below South Carolina and national averages, but the percent change from 2000 to 2010 outpaces both averages. Travel times increased by 0.47% (from 21.5 minutes to 21.6 minutes) for Sumter County but decreased by 0.8% and 4.1% for the nation and state, respectively. Meanwhile, one out of eleven households in Sumter County does not have access to a vehicle. Even with the difficulties placed on some households, the frequency and length of trips continue to increase throughout the SUATS MPO area.

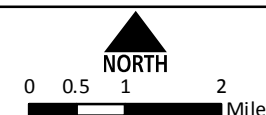
¹ (23 CFR450C, Sec.450.322)



2010 - 2040

Figure 2.1
SUATS MPO Area

- Schools
- Libraries
- Street
- Dirt Road
- Railroad
- Shaw Air Force Base
- City Limits
- SUATS MPO Area
- County Boundary



A multimodal transportation system providing true choice to all users can reduce the burden. The *SUATS 2010-2040 Long Range Transportation Plan* accounts for growth in population and traffic as well as shifting travel patterns. The plan balances the SUATS MPO area's quality of life with the need to effectively and efficiently move goods and people to a variety of local, regional, and national locations.

To ensure the plan becomes a working document, projects identified as highest priority will move into the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a multi-year, intermodal program of prioritized transportation initiatives. The TIP is updated annually for a three-year period, and projects not listed in the TIP are ineligible for FHWA and FTA funds.

Public Outreach

Transportation planning is a cooperative process led by the region's MPO and involving key stakeholders and the general public. The public involvement process offers a diversity of opinions from residents, business community, civic groups, and environmental groups. In particular, the plan must represent the viewpoints of traditionally underserved groups such as the minority, low income, and Hispanic communities. At the start of the update, the project team developed a public involvement plan that was proactive, continuous, and collaborative. Public outreach occurred through a variety of small- and large-group meetings and through an assortment of media.

Transportation Plan Steering Committee

The Transportation Plan Steering Committee was appointed as a representative group of the citizen base of the SUATS MPO area to ensure the final plan incorporated several viewpoints and concerns. Beginning with a kick-off meeting July 16, 2012, the Steering Committee met regularly to fulfill its mission of examining the existing deficiencies and potential solutions for bicycling, walking, driving, transit, and freight, as well as the relationship between transportation and land use to help shape the plan. The group's duties included serving as a sounding board for project team ideas, participating in visioning and mapping exercises, providing feedback

to the project team, and spearheading the promotion of other public involvement efforts.

At its first meeting, the Steering Committee discussed general issues and specific concerns to be addressed throughout the planning process. These issues included current influences on commuting patterns and freight movement, maintaining the small town, family-oriented feel of the area, promoting economic development through transportation infrastructure decision, and identifying and improving specific problem corridors. The group also mentioned the need for improving connectivity and options for non-automotive transportation.

In subsequent meetings the Steering Committee had the opportunity to offer feedback on planning goals and objectives, recommended multimodal improvements, project prioritization, potential funding sources, and the format for outreach events.

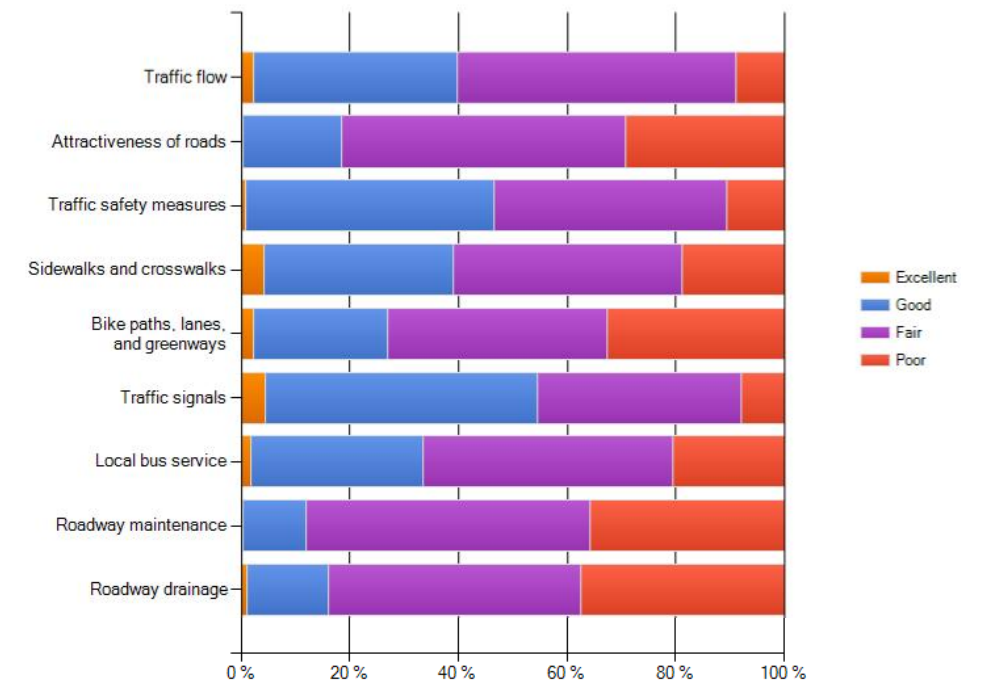
Public Questionnaire

A public questionnaire distributed to Steering Committee members and the general public provided the project team information on a variety of topics. The questionnaire was made available at city offices and on the Internet before the first public workshop. The 11-question survey asked a variety of questions on all aspects of the transportation network.

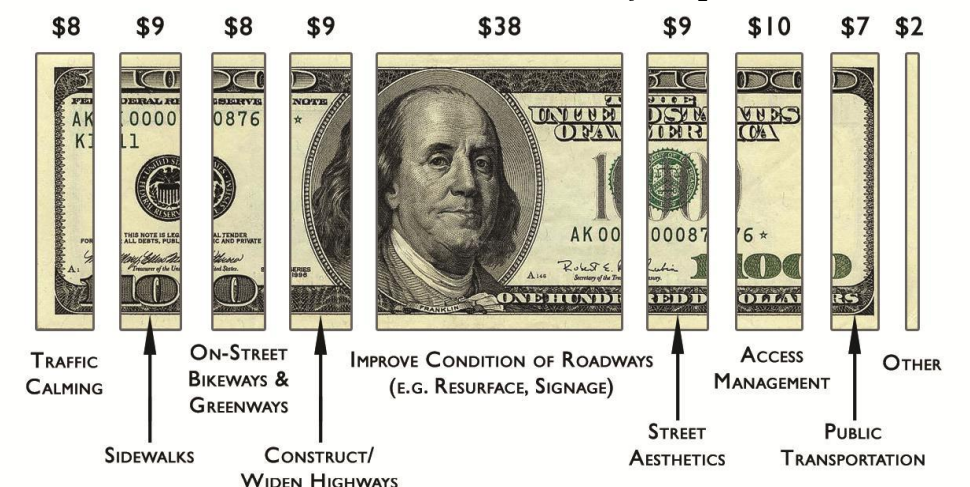
An important question from the questionnaire asked participants to rate certain aspects of the transportation system, as shown at right. The responses indicate room for improvements. In particular, the attractiveness of the roads, bike/greenway facilities, roadway maintenance, and roadway drainage were rated as poor by 30% or more of survey respondents. Many options exist to improve the transportation system in the SUATS MPO area.

Another question asked participants to divide \$100 among a series of transportation improvements. They could choose to spend all the money on one category or distribute it among several. As shown at right, most money was allocated to improving conditions of roadways. However, the combined value placed on sidewalks, transit service, and bicycle facilities is nearly a quarter of all funds. More information from the questionnaire is presented in the appropriate element.

How would you rate the following in the SUATS MPO Area?



If you had \$100 to spend on transportation improvements in the SUATS MPO Area, how would you spend it?



Public Workshops

Citizens understand the strengths and weaknesses of the SUATS MPO area's transportation system and are affected by transportation decision on a very personal level. To tap into the special knowledge of the citizens of the MPO area, the project team assisted by the Steering Committee led a series of two public workshops.

The first public workshop took place September 27, 2012 at the Sumter City Centre. The evening began with an overview presentation during which the project team described the planning process and introduced background data. Following the presentation the citizens, business owners, and local officials in attendance gathered in small groups around maps to discuss the opportunities and needs of the SUATS MPO area. The comments spanned all the elements of the long-range transportation plan. Specific comments from the small groups included:



Roadway Element

- Improve congestion around Alice Drive Middle School, Alice Drive Elementary School, and Kingsbury Elementary School
- Safety issues at Wedgefield Road, St. Pauls Church Road, and railroad crossings
- Need more connectivity between N Pike and S Pike roads
- Improve roadway lighting
- Resurface Broad Street
- Install left-turn arrow signals at Lafayette Drive's intersections with Calhoun Street and Liberty Street
- Need better connectivity between US 521 SB and US 76/378 EB

Bicycle and Pedestrian

- Need improved lighting along major pedestrian areas
- Need bike lanes along US 521
- Need additional sidewalks, particularly to Ebenezer Middle School
- Need pedestrian refuges at large intersections
- Need crosswalks and pedestrian signals at the intersection of Guignard Drive and Miller Road
- Need security measures to restrict pedestrians crossing US 76/378

Freight and Aviation

- Need bypass route from US 521 north and south of Sumter

Transit

- Need increased transit service, specifically for Route 8 – Vocational Rehab

The comments received during the first workshop informed the development of recommended facilities and policies. Prior to submitting a draft plan, the project team and Steering Committee again assembled with the public to discuss progress and recommendations. The second workshop occurred February 21, 2013, at the Sumter City Center. During the second workshop, the project team reviewed with the public the plan's Vision, recommendations, and timeline. Figures, maps, and tables from the draft plan were included in the presentation.



Previous Planning Efforts

To enhance the public involvement efforts specific to the SUATS 2010-2040 Long Range Transportation Plan, the project team considered the involvement from other recent planning activities. Recent planning efforts at SWRTA, greenway planning undertaken by Sumter City-County Planning Department, SCDOT safety and resurfacing plans, Penny for Progress project design plans, and recent federal legislation changes (MAP-21) provided valuable insight into the public's vision for the SUATS MPO area as well as the local, state, and federal funding and regulatory mechanisms.

Success in public engagement is measured not only in plan adoption but also in rapid implementation of projects identified as high-priority. The vision and objectives of the SUATS 2010-2040 Long Range Transportation Plan provide the foundation for project identification.

Vision

The vision for the SUATS Long-Range Transportation Plan was developed based on the input received from the Steering Committee and the public. The vision statement is as follows:

SUATS MPO area citizens envision a livable, growing community that attracts "new economy" as well as residents that desire higher quality lifestyles linked to a safe, efficient, maintainable, and environmentally compatible transportation system that provides convenient choices for accessing destinations throughout the SUATS MPO area.

Goals

After the vision for the plan was established, the next step was to develop a set of goals that would serve as a guide for shaping the remainder of the plan. The goals that follow balance the vision with the results of the public involvement process. These goals guided the development of the *SUATS 2010-2040 Long Range Transportation Plan*.

- **Preserve and maintain existing infrastructure** – ensure the quality of the current transportation network is upheld to provide robust service to residential, commercial, industrial, and military users
- **Create a system of interconnected streets** – improve mobility and distribute traffic efficiently and appropriately by purpose and function, including the movement of freight
- **Develop a plan that maximizes benefits to the transportation system while minimizing costs involved** – improve existing roads and corridors and implement creative strategies to better manage congestion
- **Provide a safe transportation system for all users** – develop safety projects to reduce crashes at high-collision intersections and provide better facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists
- **Encourage streetscape and “built-in” traffic calming in roadway designs** – develop street design standards that promote the concept of “complete streets” by providing provisions for bicyclists and walkers and incorporate pedestrian-friendly elements such as street trees and pedestrian level lighting
- **Develop a plan to support existing and future development** – conduct corridor-based planning that balances the transportation facilities and improvements with the function and the land uses that the corridor is trying to serve
- **Recognize the effect growth patterns have on the transportation system and vice versa** – develop strategies to effectively encourage connectivity and economic vitality while discouraging inefficient sprawl development

- **Improve freight mobility and truck route access** – promote facility improvements and clear routing to and from US 378 and US 521, including gateway features
- **Provide viable transportation alternatives to decrease dependence on the automobile, in turn reducing the demand on the existing transportation system** – provide more comprehensive bicycle, pedestrian, and transit systems that encourage use through attractive and convenient amenities serving key activity centers
- **Minimize environmental impacts of the transportation system** – utilize planning tools to preserve areas along streambeds and restore and maintain air quality status for the SUATS MPO area

MAP-21

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) was signed into law on July 6, 2012. It provides over \$105 billion in funding for surface transportation programs for fiscal years 2013 and 2014 and will guide the growth and development of America’s transportation infrastructure. The goals of MAP-21 include:

- Strengthening America’s highways
- Establishing a performance-based program
- Creating jobs and supporting economic growth
- Supporting the United States’ Department of Transportation’s aggressive safety agenda
- Streamlining Federal highway transportation programs
- Accelerating project delivery and promoting innovation

The goals of the MAP-21 language manifest themselves into eight broad planning factors that have been identified for special focus within the MPO long range transportation planning program. These planning factors are addressed throughout this plan and are specifically discussed in subsequent sections. Local officials must consider how projects and transportation initiatives address the following areas:

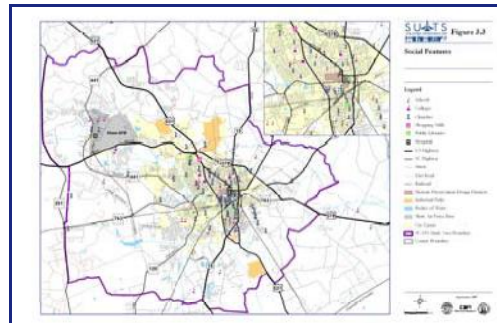
- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users
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- Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight
- Promote efficient system management and operation
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system



Elements of a Transportation Plan

This plan serves as a tool and guide for decision-makers in the implementation of the SUATS MPO area's transportation system. The plan represents the collective vision of a safe, multimodal, and interconnected transportation system that supports continued economic development without comprising the natural, historic, and social resources vital to the SUATS MPO area's sustainability. Elements of the plan include:

Social and Environmental Screening



Roadway Element



Bicycle and Pedestrian Element



Transit Element



Freight and Aviation Element



Scenario Planning



The *SUATS 2010-2040 Long Range Transportation Plan* concludes with two critical chapters. The **Financial Plan** investigates potential funding sources and revenues and identifies probable costs for the recommendations in order to produce a fiscally-constrained. The **Implementation Plan** provides a roadmap for design and construction of proposed projects.

